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ABSTRACT

Libraries in Utah have collected large numbers of materials on Mormonism and related topics and have a need to provide more detailed subject headings for these materials which the Library of Congress has lumped together under "Mormons and Mormonism." A list of subject headings which was developed for this purpose by a Committee of the Utah Library Association is now in its third edition. A decision to use this list of subject headings in connection with the cataloging of a large and valuable collection of Mormon materials by librarians at Weber State College led to the discovery that the list suffers from inconsistencies and conflicts with the Library of Congress subject headings. Each of the internal problems with the structure of the list of headings on Mormonism which were also discovered is discussed and solutions are recommended. The compilation of a fourth edition incorporating suggested changes before the Library of Congress freezes its card catalog in January 1980 is recommended. (Author/JPF)

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A DETAILED LIST OF
SUBJECT HEADINGS ON MORMONS AND MORMONISM
WITHIN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADING SYSTEM

by

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and

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Charles A. Cutter summarized the purposes of subject headings in library catalogs in his Rules For A Dictionary Catalog. Cutter stated that the purposes of the subject entries were

1. To enable a person to find a book of which the subject is known, and
2. To show what the library has on a given subject and in a given kind of literature. (In Dunkin, 1969, p.67)

The rightness of these purposes is so clear as to be undisputed among librarians. The means by which these ends might be achieved, however, has never been fully agreed upon. Because of the formidable tasks involved in providing subject access to library collections, we should freely admit that the ultimate realization of Cutter's purposes of subject cataloging has not been achieved. Librarians have, however, done their pragmatic best to gather together subject references in the catalog under terms which their patrons might reasonably be expected to search.

To the degree that Cutter's purposes have been realized, a large part of the credit is due to the development of standard lists of subject headings, including the Library of Congress List of Subject Headings, the Sears List of Subject Headings and a few other systems which have been developed for special purposes. These standard lists developed because, as Dunkin observed,

(2)

Such a list promotes uniformity among libraries, gives the cataloger ideas about the phrasing of subject headings new to him, and can (if the library wishes to do so) be used as an authority file simply by entering checks opposite headings used. (Dunkin, 1969, p.83)

Library of Congress subject headings are used for subject cataloging by the majority of academic and research libraries in this country. The only exceptions to this practice are certain special libraries with a very narrowly focused subject emphasis which serve a very well-defined group of patrons. Medical libraries, for instance, use a list of subject headings prepared by the National Library of Medicine instead of those prepared by the Library of Congress.

For most academic libraries the Library of Congress subject headings fulfill the patron's needs for subject access admirably. We may sometimes forget, then, that this list is primarily a list of subject headings for the Library of Congress itself, a list designed to serve the patrons and meet the objectives of the Library of Congress. We are reminded of this fact when we find subjects which are not treated adequately in the Library of Congress subject headings list when measured by the needs of our own patrons and our own libraries' objectives. This creates a dilemma for librarians who, on one hand, want to enjoy the advantages of a standard list of subject headings and who, on the other hand, want to be able to describe certain subjects more completely in order to meet their local needs.

Librarians in Utah have faced this dilemma with regard to subjects for materials relating to the Mormon religion and its people. Because a large percentage of the population of the state are Mormons and because

the modern history of the state is linked very closely with the Church and its people, Utah libraries have tended to collect large numbers of materials on Mormonism and related topics. And for these same reasons, we have a need in Utah to provide detailed subject access to these materials which the Library of Congress has, in large part, lumped together under the subject heading 'Mormons and Mormonism.'

The solution to this dilemma is to construct a list of subject headings which will serve the needs of Utah libraries while maintaining the integrity of the Library of Congress subject heading system, a delicately interlaced system of subject headings, see references, see also references, and refer from references.

A list of subject headings relating to Mormonism was devised by the Committee on Technical Services of the Utah Library Association in 1960. This list must have been warmly received because a second edition of the list was published in 1962. A third and greatly expanded edition of the list was published in 1974 under the title Mormon-Utah Subject Headings In Use at Harold B. Lee Library, B.Y.U.

The terms from this list have been used from the very beginning at the Weber State College Library, we suppose. However, the recent acquisition of a large and very valuable collection of Mormon materials as a gift to the library's Special Collections Department from Mr. Hyrum B. Wheelwright drastically changed our pattern of use of the list. While we had formerly adopted a term here and there from the list ad hoc, the cataloging of this large and varied collection forced us to examine the list of headings on Mormonism as a whole and to examine its interrelations with the Library of Congress

subject headings which we use for all other materials in our library's main catalog. In so doing we discovered some shortcomings of the list, including some inconsistencies and conflicts with the Library of Congress system, and ambiguities in the use of some references. We also discovered internal problems in the structure of the list. In this paper we will describe the problems which have been identified and recommend the adoption of solutions, some of which we have already adopted in our library because of the pressing need to get materials classified, cataloged, and ready for our patrons to use.

II

When we began the cataloging and classification of the Wheelwright collection we had no idea of the problems which lay ahead. Because of the importance of the collection, a meeting was held between members of the library's Technical Services Department, the Special Collections Department, and the library director. At that meeting it was agreed that the list of subject headings on Mormonism would be used in order to provide a more detailed subject access to the collection. This decision was implemented immediately by Mrs. Stella Chang, who is in charge of the cataloging for Special Collections. Mrs. Chang selected subject headings from the list and assigned them to materials. Cards for the card catalog and for the subject authority file were typed and filed. In the process of checking our authority file with the list of quarterly additions and changes of subject headings which we receive from the Library of Congress, some discrepancies were found by Mrs. Ardell Carter. In the process of filing the cards in the library's catalog, more discrepancies between the two lists began to emerge. Kathy Baum, who is in charge of the library's filing section discovered these problems as she dropped the cards in the

catalog. She returned the cards to Mrs. Chang for possible corrections. The volume of these corrections soon made it clear that the ad hoc addition of these headings to the library's card catalog was creating a potential for confusion. Accordingly, it was decided that we should undertake a thorough review of the headings in the list of headings on Mormonism, comparing them with the headings in the Library of Congress Subject Heading List. A student was assigned to go through the two lists searching for differences.

We quickly discovered that comparing the two lists was a difficult project in itself. The project was difficult primarily because of a complete lack of "refer from" references in the list of subject headings on Mormonism. These refer from references are indicated by x and xx in other subject heading lists. They provide an inventory of terms for which "see" and "see also" references have been made. Before we could study the list of headings as a whole, it was necessary for us to construct refer from references for all of the see and see also references which have been made in the list.

While making our file of refer from references, it was discovered that the distinctions in meaning and use between see and see also references had been confused, leading to considerable ambiguity. The function of see references is to eliminate synonymous expressions in our language, gathering together all references for a subject under a single term. The function of see also references is to inform patrons of valid subject headings which may guide them to additional information on the same topic. It is clear that these two purposes have been confused in the list of subject headings on Mormonism. The list is liberally sprinkled with see references, while there are only a few see also references. Many of the see

references should be see also references instead. For instance, the list gives the references

Coffee. See Mormon doctrine--Word of Wisdom--Coffee
and

Death. See Mormon doctrine--Death

But 'Coffee' and 'Death' are not synonyms for the terms which the list refers us to. They are, in fact, valid subject headings in the Library of Congress system and we would be entirely mistaken if we were to eliminate them with see references. These references should be see also references because they direct the patron to additional information on the topic. These are not isolated examples. We have counted six such inappropriate references on page two of the list alone. Accordingly, we propose that the internal structure of the list should be made clear and consistent with other subject heading lists by the addition of refer from references. We also propose that the confusion between the use of see references and see also references should be eliminated.

Turning from the structure of the list to its content we found other problems. We found a number of headings which we characterize as "variant headings," that is to say, headings which differ in some respects from the headings established by the Library of Congress. For instance, the Mormonism list recommends the heading 'The Deseret news' but the Library of Congress has established this as the 'The Deseret news, Salt Lake City.' The Mormonism list recommends 'Brigham Young University,' and further recommends abbreviating the entry to 'B. Y. U.' when used with subdivisions. The Library of Congress has established this as 'Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.' Also, currently the Library of Congress requires that all such

terms be spelled out, rather than abbreviated. Our authority for Library of Congress practice is The National Union Catalog, a catalog of printed cards which includes copies of cards from Library of Congress' own catalog.

We admit that these variant headings are only slightly different, and that human beings can read and assimilate the two and deal with them easily. But as our catalog records are put into data bases, even small differences become important because computers do not "read." They only scan strings of electrical impulses. This means that information which is not uniformly input may be irretrievable. We recommend, then, that wherever variations in the form of heading exist, the library should choose the form established by the Library of Congress.

We found other differences between the two lists which we can only characterize as conflicting headings. The most significant example of this is at the very heart of the list of headings on Mormonism, the heading 'Mormon church.' The scope note for this heading says: "Use for materials effecting the church as an institution. For works concerning individuals, see Mormons." This is in direct conflict with the Library of Congress heading 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.' The term 'Mormon church' is a nickname. To non-Mormons the term might signify the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and any or all of the apostate groups, as well as the Utah church. But it is clear the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' is a valid heading in the Library of Congress system and in other systems of subject headings as well because it is the proper corporate name of the Church. As such, it would be a valid heading whether it was printed in the list or not, since such names can be added at the discretion of the cataloger. Why then was the term 'Mormon church'

selected? We can only speculate that it was selected because it is shorter than 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.' This same tendency to abbreviate is evident in the headings for 'Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,' which has been abbreviated to 'Reorganized church' when used with subdivisions. At the present time we have a large number of cards in our catalog under the term 'Mormon church.' We believe that those references should be changed to 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' with see references from 'Mormon church' and from 'L. D. S. church.' We recommend that in cases where the two lists are in conflict, the form established by the Library of Congress should be used.

The Mormonism list does use the full form of the name of the Church in connection with various splinter groups. For instance, 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Fundamentalists)' and 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Strangites)' are both in the list, as are eight other "apostate" groups. However, we are unsure about the appropriateness of these headings, too. Are these the proper corporate names of these churches? Or are they conventional headings based on the language used by members of the Utah church to refer to other denominations related to Mormonism? Our research indicates that the latter is the case. We believe, however, that the list should reflect the proper corporate names of these churches rather than the nicknames assigned to them by Utah Mormons. By constructing a special list of headings on Mormonism we are saying that the Library of Congress subject heading list is ethnocentric because it does not give adequate treatment to the Church. We should not, in turn, promulgate subject headings for the smaller

"Mormon" denominations which reflect a similar bias.

Finally, we also found that some headings in the list need to be brought up to date to conform to present Library of Congress practices. For instance, the heading "Mormon church--Negroes" should be changed to reflect the recent decision that the terms 'Afro-Americans' and 'Blacks' should be substituted for the term 'Negroes' in Library of Congress subject headings. We propose that in order to accomodate such changes in a timely manner, the practice of publishing periodic additions and changes to the Mormon subject headings list should be adopted.

We recognize that the examples we have discussed above are brief. We have more examples for any who are still sceptical about our claims regarding the problems of implementing the list of subject headings on Mormonism within the Library of Congress subject heading system. We have shown only a few examples because of the limitations of time and space. We believe that similar problems would occur if the list of subject headings on Mormonism were to be integrated into any other standard list of subject headings.

III

In discussing the list of subject headings on Mormonism, we have been sharply critical. We have dealt with its problems seriously because it is a significant contribution to library science and to librarianship in the state of Utah. Its editors and contributors, who have included Chad Flake, Naomi Rich, Leon Storrs, and Karen Matthews, among others, deserve high regard for their accomplishment which has endured for almost twenty years. This accomplishment is dimmed now mainly by the needs which we have today to put those subject headings into a form which will be compatible with national standards in order to make them usable in the national data bases

and national bibliographic networks to which we now belong. Because of our membership in these networks, the subject headings which we use for materials on Mormonism may soon be adopted nationally, though perhaps unknowingly, by other libraries which use the same data bases. Now is the time for us to examine our practices and make whatever improvements can be made before our problems are transmitted to other libraries which lack the understanding of Mormonism which is necessary to correct them. There is even a possibility at the present time that we could have our preferred headings incorporated into the Library of Congress subject heading list, if they are in a compatible form. At the meeting of the American Library Association in January, 1978, Mary K. Pietris, speaking on Library of Congress subject headings, invited interested persons and groups to submit suggestions for additions and changes to Library of Congress subject headings to the Subject Cataloging Division of the Library of Congress. (Gorman, 1978, p. 162)

Accordingly, we recommend that the specific changes in the list of subject headings on Mormonism which we have discussed above be adopted by other libraries which use the list. Because of the far-reaching consequences of such a list, and because we recognize a need for greater cooperation among libraries which use the list in order to solve the problems which we have identified, we also recommend that a new committee be established to address these problems. We suggest that either a new Committee on Technical services of the Utah Library Association (ULA) or the existing Cataloging Committee of the Utah College Library Council (UCLC) undertake a new study of the subject headings on Mormonism. The committee should be given two charges: first, to add new headings and make changes to the existing list wherever they are needed, and second, to overhaul the

existing list, making it compatible with the Library of Congress system. We suggest that the committee should be given the objective of publishing a new fourth edition of the list of subject headings on Mormonism before January 2, 1980, when the Library of Congress has announced its intention to freeze its card catalog.

Since the two charges enumerated above are both ongoing processes, rather than concrete goals in themselves, we suggest that the committee should be a permanent committee of either ULA or UCLC. Even if the appropriate headings on Mormonism were added to the Library of Congress subject heading list, the committee should continue to function in an advisory capacity to the Library of Congress.

We believe that these matters are of considerable significance to libraries in Utah and to other libraries which hold large collections of materials on Mormonism. We strongly urge the adoption of these recommendations.

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